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# Touchless Access Control Solutions

### HOW ACCESS CONTROL PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN A SAFE AND SECURE RETURN-TO-WORK STRATEGY

Employers today face a new challenge: to provide a safe and clean work environment as employees bring with them a new social consciousness centered on public health awareness, social distancing and hygienic spaces. As employes consider a return to the physical workplace, they must adapt to new requirements, implement new procedures, and leverage technology to alleviate their employees' concerns.

Access control plays a critical role in creating a safe back-to-work strategy. Organizations can leverage contactless physical access technologies — including mobile credentials along with Bluetooth solutions — as well as implement visitor management tools to provide employees with an experience that supports a healthy and safe work environment.

## CHANGED EXPECTATIONS

As organizations move toward re-opening their offices, workers bring with them a new awareness of issues around human proximity, environmental and surface cleanliness, and the sharing of publicly accessed resources such as touch screens and keypads. Hygiene isn't a new concern, but the level of awareness is new, as well as the need to give employees the confidence that their workplace is not only secure, but healthy and safe.

Employees want to see plans and processes. They need to be reassured that a return to the workplace will be thoughtfully managed and carefully implemented, with timelines, clear policies, and specific practices in place to support distancing and hygiene.

Physical access is a prime area of interest. Crowded entryways, elevators and shared working spaces are a threat to safe social distancing. Credentialing processes that come with high human-to-human contact are also a cause for concern.

Those who manage physical access can play a key role in helping to meet these changed expectations. With health and safety concerns at the forefront, security and facilities personnel have the opportunity to be the heroes of the day. At a time when employee safety is not just an ordinary need, but an extraordinary moral obligation, teams can rise to the fore with proactive solutions that meaningfully impact quality of life. Access control management can help route employees, in tandem with efforts to stagger work times. Physical access control systems (PACS) can also be used in support of thoughtful visitor management.

While contactless credentials inherently support a touchless "badging in" experience, employers and building managers should implement these technologies as part of a holistic approach to building management. Clear policies, explicit signage, cleanliness protocols — all are part of this big picture.

## A NEW ERA FOR EMPLOYEE SAFETY

Those looking to support a safe return to the workplace can look to technology to help minimize the high-touch human interactions that have characterized PACS in the past. By upgrading from legacy systems to more modernized solutions, it is possible to significantly reduce human contact around access control in a way that directly addresses employee concerns.

## TOUCHLESS ACCESS CONTROL

Various forms of touchless access control can help to reduce viral spread at human-to-object touchpoints. By reducing contact between humans and the objects related to access control, security could help to minimize potential cross-contamination.

Automatic door operators, revolving doors, and sliding doors — all can help to reduce contact at high-volume entry and exit points. These can be coupled with contactless credentials and readers to ensure security while minimizing surface contamination.

Another strategy involves the use of long-range capable readers that leverage Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) connections to deliver read performance at a distance. With a read range of up to several meters, BLE can further distance employees who might otherwise crowd up around readers and doors.

Mobile access likewise reduces the need for employees to physically touch cards and communal readers. "The phone is something that belongs solely to the individual," said Henrik Hjelte, HID Global Solution Manager, Mobile Access. "If you only have to touch your own mobile device, then you're pretty safe because you don't need to touch anything else."

Organizations that rely on keypads or two-factor authentication may find mobile credentials and mobile capable readers to be a more hygienic alternative. The user is required to unlock their phone using a passcode, fingerprint or facial read in order for the phone to unlock, thus delivering two-factor security without the need to touch a shared keypad.

In the same way, mobile also allows for a biometric layer to be added to the access experience. "You can configure the mobile credential to only work when the device is unlocked, thereby requiring the owner to authenticate using their enrolled biometric, whether fingerprint or facial recognition," Hjelte said. "That mitigates the risk of a lost, stolen, or shared mobile device from being used. And by leveraging the technology on the mobile device instead of at the door, you're only touching your own device, and not a touchpoint that is shared with every other occupant."

Touchless credentials, including mobile-based, shouldn't be limited to opening doors. Organizations also may find that these credentials support more hygienic protocols for logging in to networks, paying for vending, or activating printing.

In order to reduce contact at shared surfaces, these technologies need to be implemented in tandem with clear policies and supporting signage. Access control points need to be kept clean and sanitary, and special protocols may be required for keeping these areas hygienic when employees shift their schedules. Security also can issue specific access control rules and protocols for visitors, both at the point of entry and while on site.

## OVER-THE-AIR CREDENTIALING

Most credentialing processes rely on a high degree of human-to-human interaction: someone in IT or the card office prepares the card, the card may then be passed to HR or the front desk for delivery to the user. And when a card is lost or stolen, the process repeats. Whether it is an employee or a visitor, the credentialing process is typically a high-touch operation.

"The credential issuance process can lead to long lines at a reception desk, or in a tight, crowded office space," said Brandon Arcement, HID Global Senior Director, Strategic Applications. To the greatest extent possible, it makes sense today to seek out credentialing solutions that are not just digital but can be remotely managed, so credentials can be issued and managed without this high degree of in-person contact. "The goal is to make that provisioning an over-the-air process, rather than a human-to-human interaction," said Arcement.

Modernized systems enable this type of provisioning, with the ability to send credentials to any authorized device, anywhere. Rather than waiting in a crowded reception area, employees and visitors can have their credentials delivered contact-free.

Over-the-air provisioning minimizes contact for those seeking credentials, and it can have a dramatic impact on the human-to-human contact for the administrator charged with assigning credentials. Fewer visits from those looking to obtain credentials significantly reduces the risk factor for those that normally see a range of personnel on a daily basis. "They have the same level of assurance. It just doesn't require the human to be in front of it," Arcement said.

## VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Visitors introduce a new variable to the equation. They must be credentialed upon entry, and their untracked movements can pose a health risk, or at least introduce a dangerous unknown should contact tracing become necessary.

Solid policies and advanced technologies can ensure safe movement of visitors. Visitor management solutions can be used either standalone or in conjunction with an organization's access control system. Visitors self-register in the lobby and hosts are notified when they arrive. Driver's license scanners, barcode scanners, cameras, and printers all help support those front desk processes.

When a visitor checks in, the system sends the visitor's details over to that access control solution, and then the visitor is given clearance based upon different fields within that visitor record. "That means that a family member who's coming on site over the lunch hour could be assigned very different access than somebody who's there for a sales call and needs access to certain rooms, or a contractor who's going to be on site over the weekend," said Kate Kim, HID Global Product Marketing Manager, Visitor Management Solutions. "And all of that is done automatically."

While the primary use case is for visitors, these systems can also be used to issue employees temporary badges for single day use, or to issue replacement badges. Visitor management solutions are also ideal for a range of high-volume settings, including healthcare, schools, and logistics — all places where physical access control is critical and visitors are frequent.

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For organizations that have implemented pre-registration or mobile access, HID Global's visitor management solutions further supports a safer contactless experience. Pre-registration allows the employee to enter their visitor's details ahead of time to speed up the check-in process and allows for the selection of mobile access for on-site building access. The visitor downloads an app, and their credential is automatically sent to the mobile phone upon check-in.

"If the visitor walks up to the front desk, the receptionist can scan an invitation barcode, ask additional questions regarding recent health status, enter that information in, and then have the access credential sent directly to the visitor," said Kim. "They never need to physically be handed a badge, and they can actually use their phone throughout the building for access."

Even more, records from the visitor management system can be used for follow-up tracking of potential contacts in case an employee or visitor receives a positive virus test result.

For those charged with implementing and overseeing physical access control, these are extraordinarily challenging times.

"You may have less staff on site to be your eyes and ears, and the staff that is there is handling a higher workload," Kim said. "In order to operate safe spaces, there is a need to streamline operations, to make sure you are asking for the right information and that people entering your building are aware of what your policies are."

While technology can play a significant role in supporting social distancing and other pandemic-related needs, policies are at the core of any successful return-to-work effort.

It is critical, for example, to have solid audit systems in place. PACS systems generate logs, reports, and archives — invaluable information, if put to good use. Building managers can leverage this key data to see who was in the facility and when, in order to build a fuller picture of the operational risks.

## BEST PRACTICES

To make these measures effective, employers will need to implement certain general best practices around space utilization and hygiene in particular.

Some policies are a must-have:

- **Signage —** Key to enforcing new policies and procedures, signage is a clear way to communicate evolving expectations.

- **Hand Sanitization —** Hand sanitizer stations must be readily available to all employees and everyone should be encouraged to wash or sanitize their hands often.

- **Physically-Distanced Areas —** Reconfigure seating to allow for appropriate social distancing, add signage on the walls and indicators on the floor to direct traffic flow, discourage in-person meetings, and temporarily close common-area amenities.

- **Touchless Options —** Wherever possible, eliminate processes that require touch, or limit them to a single individual. Work with service providers to identify and implement hands-free technologies and processes, especially at high-touch areas like doors and elevators.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) —** Health experts around the globe recommend that everyone wear a mask over their mouth and nose. At minimum, employers should make masks available to all employees.

- **Increased Routine Cleaning —** All frequently-touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected several times a day. That may include tables and doorknobs, light switches, desks, and phones. PACS technology such as keypads and biometric readers likewise should be subject to frequent disinfection. Where possible, configure access control devices for contactless card or mobile use, rather than fingerprint or touch screen.

- **Updated Visitor Policies —** Implement visitor access policies that limit contact while on premise, include a health status questionnaire and/or temperature screen, and restrict unnecessary movement.

# Moving Forward

While the pandemic presents formidable challenges to building management and security, this moment in time also represents a unique opportunity.

In addressing the new needs around social distancing, contact tracing, and space utilization, the professional community has a chance to examine access control in depth, to take a broader, more holistic view of PACS and its supporting technologies.

Some will look to mobile credentials to reduce the need for person-to-person contact. Others may invest in automatic door opening, or they may choose to implement a self-service visitor management system.

Ideally, all these capabilities will come together as part of a broader approach to PACS. By leveraging these capabilities in tandem, and with the support of sound policy and governance, employers have an opportunity to satisfy workers' legitimate concerns. A holistic view of PACS can help to create workplaces that are safe and secure, empowering building operators with the knowledge they need to minimize crowding, and to manage the use of space according to well-defined best practices.

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